



# From Poor Reputation to Model Mixed-Use

## Emeryville, California

**V**ictim to the typical abandonment of numerous industrial sectors in the mid-1900s, Emeryville, CA was left with an unappealing burden of dilapidation, poverty, and unemployment. The city was plagued by brownfields, with at least sixty percent of its non-residential property lying vacant or underutilized, and a loss of 450 jobs and \$13.3 million in tax revenues. In addition to this uninviting spectacle, considerable soil and ground water contamination was left behind, contributing to the proverbial dark cloud hanging over the small city. Nevertheless, with the help of a few key players, including EPA, the City of Emeryville has changed its poor reputation by turning brownfields into model mixed-use developments.

One particular brownfield in Emeryville, Heritage Square, was home to two structures: a transformer manufacturing facility owned by Westinghouse Corporation, and an oil-processing tank farm owned by Chevron. In 1993, the City of Emeryville, with the help of EmeryStation, LLC/ Wareham Development, constructed an Amtrak station at the property hoping to attract development to the area. However, high amounts of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) existed in the soils around Heritage Square, and the Westinghouse facility was monitored by EPA as a federal Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) site. These factors contributed to anxiety and hesitation from prospective developers.

EPA awarded the City of Emeryville a \$200,000 Brownfields Assessment Demonstration Pilot grant in 1996. As part of a citywide program, the city used the funds to determine that PCB contamination in the soil surrounding Heritage Square, which was assumed to be widespread, was not a major concern for the redevelopment of the property. In addition, Ignacio Dayrit, Emeryville Pilot Coordinator, explains that “with EPA’s help, we [the city] were able to limit the extent of the [TSCA] agreement to develop on certain parcels and showed there were low third-party risks on the site.” These factors helped to eliminate the negative stigma of the property, alleviating developers’ fears.

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*The Green City Lofts in Emeryville, California.*

## JUST THE FACTS:

- A large, former industrial site in Emeryville, CA held contamination uncertainties that discouraged developers.
- Assessments funded through EPA Brownfields grants revealed that the nature of PCB contamination on the property was not as severe as suspected.
- An EPA Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund was used to create a final, capping solution to remaining contaminants. This removed the final barrier to redevelopment.
- This once-stigmatized property is now home to hundreds of thousands of square feet of office space and 100 condominium units.

*“EPA has certainly been involved with [the city of Emeryville] for some time... both have been proactive in thinking outside the box in terms of how to deal with brownfields issues, which are many in Emeryville.”*

**—A private developer in Emeryville, CA**

Despite the PCB contamination, EmeryStation, LLC bought the brownfield and arranged for its cleanup. Westinghouse agreed to dig up most of the contamination, but some remained. In 1997, EmeryStation I, a 250,000 square-foot office building, was constructed on the Heritage Square property. EmeryStation II, a parking structure with more than 800 spaces, was also built, with plans to build the Terraces at EmeryStation, 100 condominium units above the structure. An additional 170,000 square-foot office building, EmeryStation North, was also planned for the property. However, both the Terraces and EmeryStation North could not obtain final occupancy approval until the lack of adequate vehicular access to the structures was addressed.

An EPA \$500,000 Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund (BCRLF) awarded to the city in 1999 was used to construct an access road that served as a cap to remaining PCB contamination, allowing for final occupancy approval for EmeryStation North and the Terraces. Geoff Sears, a representative of Wareham Development, expressed that “EPA has certainly been involved with Emeryville for some time,” and that “both have been proactive in thinking outside the box in terms of how to deal with brownfields issues, which are many in Emeryville.”

Since the construction of the access road, EmeryStation North and the Terraces at EmeryStation have been completed. In 2003, Emeryville received a \$350,000 EPA assessment grant to assess the last, and most contaminated portion of the property, called the “mound,” which will become a mixed-use Transit Hub directly adjacent to the Emeryville Amtrak station. The station serves not only Amtrak trains, but also inter-city trains, AC transit bus service, and a free shuttle. The entire redevelopment area encompasses approximately 10 acres and is adjacent to significant commercial development. With affordable housing, office, and retail space, this transit-oriented development is truly a model example of mixed-use redevelopment.

## CONTACTS:

For more information contact  
U.S. EPA REGION 9  
(415) 947-8000

Visit the EPA Brownfields Web site at:  
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